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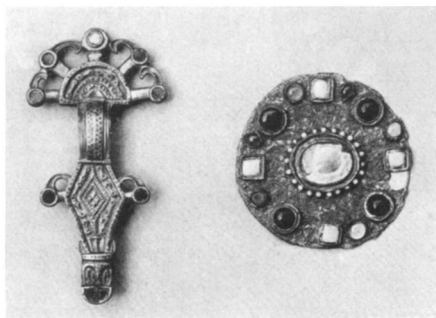
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touched up with gold. Next to the belt-buckles the most numerous objects of a single class in the collection are the circular fibulæ of various sizes made of gold inlaid with paste or jewels displaying the combination of red and gold to which the early northern goldsmiths were so partial. While the pattern of interlaced bands so characteristic of the belt-buckles before referred to may be traced back to Roman art in its last days, it seems probable that the technique



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of these gold fibulæ inlaid with paste in a sort of cloisonné was derived from the East, from Persia through Byzantium. A remarkable piece in which the two methods of workmanship are combined is a sword, the hilt of which is executed in iron inlaid with gold and silver niello, while the guard is ornamented with jeweled stars in red paste, set in gold.

It is impossible in the space of a Bulletin article to mention the greater number of objects in the collection; for the majority of the types represented, — buckles, cross-shaped and digitated fibulæ, chatelaine plaques, and other ornaments, — it will be necessary to refer to the catalogue of the collection by S. de Ricci. A copy of this catalogue will be placed with the collection when it is put on exhibition near Mr. Morgan's earlier loan of Merovingian antiquities at the north end of the Main Hall in the Wing of Decorative Arts. The importance of these new additions to the collection already in place cannot easily be overemphasized.

W. R. V.

## BAS-RELIEFS OF ASHURNASIRPAL

AN important loan to the collection representing Assyrian art in the Museum has recently been made through the generosity of Mr. J. Pierpont Morgan, in the shape of three large alabaster slabs in bas-relief. They belonged to the palace of Ashurnasirpal, who reigned over Assyria during the years 885 to 860 B. C. This ruler transferred the capital from Nineveh to Calah, which city is now known as Nimrud, where during his reign Assyrian art received considerable attention. He had the walls of his palace covered with large alabaster slabs, upon which were sculptured bas-reliefs, depicting himself taking part in religious ceremonies, in realistic war scenes, etc. When Rassam and Loftus excavated the northwest palace, they transported to the British Museum many of these slabs, the more important of which are represented by plaster replicas in the Metropolitan Museum. Other slabs found their way to different museums, and now Mr. Morgan is in possession of three well-preserved originals.

The winged figure which is found on one of the slabs occurs frequently on the reliefs of Ashurnasirpal. He is usually shown, as here, standing before the sacred tree, which is a conventionalized palm tree. In his right hand he holds a bunch of dates, which closely resembles a pine cone; and in the other hand a basket or bucket. The usual interpretation of this scene is that the genius is standing before the tree in the act of fertilizing it with pollen. Some maintain, however, that the scene represents the adoration of this "tree of life." In other slabs the winged genius stands in the same attitude behind the king, who is facing the tree. In still other scenes, such genii stand on either side of the king and face him, but in the same attitude, with cone and bucket.

The winged creature of the second slab stands in a similar attitude, but without the cone and bucket. This figure in all probability stands in adoration of the tree, which was on an accompanying slab.

The third relief is that of a eunuch

represented as the king's armor bearer. Behind him is again found a portion of the sacred tree.

The king had an inscription carved across each slab, including those that had not been sculptured. The same inscription repeated over and over is found on all these slabs. In it the king gives a long list of his titles, which are descriptive of his greatness in times of war and peace, besides telling in grandiloquent terms of his wonderful achievements of conquest, from the country of the rising sun to that of the setting sun. Following are the opening lines of the inscription:

"The palace of Ashurnasirpal, the priest of Ashur, the darling of the gods Ellil and Enmashtu, the beloved of the gods Anu and Dagan, the powerful one among the gods, the mighty king, the king of hosts, the king of Assyria, the son of Tukulti-Enmashtu, the great king, the mighty king, the king of hosts, the king of Assyria, the son of Adad-nirari, the great king, the mighty king, the king of hosts, the king of Assyria; the valiant hero, who by the assistance of Ashur, his lord, goes forth, and among the princes of the four quarters (of the world) does not have a rival; the shepherd, who feareth not the battle; the mighty flood, who is without an opponent; the king who has subjugated those that were not submissive unto him, and has conquered all the hosts of men; the mighty hero who has trampled upon the necks of his enemies, and has trodden all foes, and has shattered the power of the strong; the king who with the help of the great gods, his lords, goes forth, and whose hand has captured all lands; who has conquered all the highlands, and has received their tribute, exacted hostages, and established control over all countries," etc.

A. T. CLAY.

#### A BOLOGNESE NIELLO

IN the BULLETIN for September, 1910, there was illustrated and briefly described a silver plaquette inlaid with niello, representing two nude figures (Hercules and Dejanira) standing under a garland. This piece, correctly ascribed

to the North Italian school of the second half of the fifteenth century, further study has shown beyond question to be the work of a Bolognese craftsman, presumably an assistant in the *bottega* of Francesco Francia. Some additional notes may consequently be of interest.

The comparatively few Italian nielli existing today, including not only the incised metal plaques inlaid with black metallic amalgam, the niello proper, but also the sulphur casts and the proofs taken from these, the prints made from the incised plaques themselves, the prints from engraved plates copying nielli, and prints in the manner of nielli, may be divided into two principal groups, the Florentine and the Bolognese. At the head of the Bolognese school was the famous painter and goldsmith, Francesco Raibolini, called Francia (1450-1517), whose multiple talents found expression in many and varied activities. Francia began his artistic career as a goldsmith, and for many years after he had won reputation as a painter, maintained his goldsmith's *bottega*. Of Francia's work in niello, in which he is known to have excelled, we have no examples attested by documents. A few nielli and several fine niello prints may, however, be assigned to him with considerable certainty on stylistic grounds.

Among the niello prints attributed by Dutuit<sup>1</sup> to Francia, there is one (No. 344) having considerable interest for us, as it closely reproduces our niello, differing only in its finer execution. The print was consequently not an impression from our plaquette; nor is it likely that the print was engraved as a model design after the niello. The reverse is more probably true, that our niello was made in Francia's workshop by an assistant copying the niello print which Dutuit lists or the original niello from or after which it was made.

This niello print was discovered and described for the first time by Charles de Langalerie in a brochure published in 1858. It was ascribed by this critic to Peregrino da Cesena, an imitative pupil and follower of Francia, by whom we have several signed

<sup>1</sup>Eugene Dutuit: *Manuel de l'amateur d'estampes*, Paris, 1888; I, 2nd part, p. 196, No. 344.